

Cyclamate

1-12-70

WHEN THE DEPARTMENT of Health, Education, and Welfare banned cyclamate-sweetened products from general use, it did so on the basis of an unpublished study. It is, so far as we know, still unpublished, but we are told that bladder cancers of an unusual nature developed in six of 12 rats fed cyclamate throughout their adult lives in a dosage of 2,500 mg./Kg. body weight/day. The rats did not receive cyclamate alone; they also were fed saccharin together with the cyclamate. We are uncertain in what dosage the saccharin was administered, but the cyclamate dosage was massive, 50 to 70 times that recommended for human beings.

Cyclamates have been in wide use in this country for at least 15 years, and there is no evidence available that they have caused cancer in human beings. At the time the ban on cyclamates was announced, we contrasted the situation to that obtaining in cigarettes (MEDICAL TRIBUNE, November 8, 1969). "There is no evidence," we said, "that smoking cigarettes causes cancer of the lung in rats or in any other subhuman living creature. But an enormously large study has been going on for decades in man, and it has been abundantly clear for years that smoking cigarettes causes bronchogenic carcinoma in human beings. It is the cause of other human misfortunes as well, and there is even evidence that cigarette smokers have a considerably higher incidence of bladder cancer than do non-smokers. Yet at most we have seen fit to imprint a label on cigarette packs: 'Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazard-

ous to Your Health.' In fact, as everyone by now surely knows, the Government even subsidizes growers of tobacco." We ended by asking, "Who's loony now?"

Hard on the heels of the decision by HEW to outlaw cyclamate for general use, the authorities in Sweden, Finland, Japan, Canada, and the United Kingdom jumped on the bandwagon. These countries, as it happens, are not bound by the stringencies of the Delaney Amendment of 1958, which specifies that a food additive that has been shown to cause cancer when fed to human beings or animals must be removed from the market. What led these countries to precipitate acceptance of this precipitate American decision?

The distinguished British journal *Nature* has made some sour editorial comments about the "farcical progress" of the cyclamate bandwagon and questioned whether "scientific advisers or the politicians who manipulated them look the more ridiculous." The journal emphasized that the evidence of the cancer potential of cyclamate was "about as solid as candy floss." Aside from the massive dose of cyclamates, at which, said *Nature*, "it might even be surprising if the rats had failed to develop tumours," the journal also queried whether it was "the cyclamates or the saccharin, or synergism between the two, that had raised the malignant-looking cells in the animals' bladder."

We are not suggesting that saccharin be banned. We question the wisdom of banning cyclamate and suggest that when medical questions are handled as *political* questions they are likely to be mishandled.

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